

Education and Health

The carer will be provided with advice on education and health for the child. If the child is of school age the carer and parents will need to agree which school the child will go to, who will inform the school of the arrangements, who will attend parents' evenings and school functions, who the teacher will talk to if there is a problem and what help and support the child may need at school/with homework. The child must be registered with a GP and dentist. Any allergies, illnesses or treatments need to be noted by the carer and immunisations need to be up to date. Parental consent in writing is needed for a carer to be able to take the child to the doctor and in the case of an emergency the parents should be informed.

Cultural Identity, Race and Religion

It is important that children retain their cultural identity, racial identity, and religious beliefs. Parents and carers should discuss these issues so carers can make any special arrangements necessary to carry out these practices. The carers may also need to be vigilant if a child is of a different ethnic origin to the local community; look out for discrimination and take action to deal with this if it occurs.

Finance

Finance for the child needs to be agreed between the parents and carer. The parents need to inform the HM Revenues and Customs (www.gov.uk/childbenefit) that the child is no longer living with them and is now living with the carer. If the carer is claiming benefits, they may be entitled to claim benefit for the child if the parents are not receiving benefits themselves.

What if the Situation Changes?

It is important that parents keep in touch with the child's carer and social worker and inform them of any change of address or telephone numbers, etc. The parents should agree with the carer in what circumstances the arrangement should end and how - it is very upsetting for a child if this is done suddenly without preparation and planning. The carer must inform Children's Services if there are any changes to their household circumstances whilst privately fostering, including: a change of address, if someone moves in or out of your house, if anyone living in your house commits an offence, if you move to another local authority area or if your financial circumstances change.



Is someone else's child living with you?

Is your child living with someone else?

If yes, then did you know that you must inform Knowsley Council about this so that we can make sure the arrangements are suitable. Call Knowsley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0151 443 2600.

There will be many young people in Knowsley living with someone who isn't their parent or a close relative. In this situation the child is often part of a private fostering arrangement. But, did you know that if you are involved in a private fostering arrangement you are legally required to inform the local authority about this?

How to make Knowsley Council Aware of a Private Fostering Arrangement

PLEASE INFORM KNOWSLEY MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) ON 0151 443 4311 OR VISIT WWW.KNOWSLESCP.ORG.UK



KNOWSLEY
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP



Knowsley Council

PRIVATE FOSTERING - A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16, or up to age 18 if the young person is disabled, is cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more. A close relative in this situation is either a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or even step-parents. They could be related by marriage or a full or half-relation. Partners of the mother or father are not classed as a relative. Neither are extended family members such as great aunts, great uncles or parent's cousins. It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by Children's Services or if the person looking after the child is an approved foster carer.

Common situations for private fostering arrangements include:

- Children are living with a family friend because of a family crisis
- Teenagers are living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- A parent is admitted to hospital for long periods
- Parents send their children to this country from overseas for education or health care

There are many reasons why parents might need to ask someone else to care for their child in a private arrangement. Parents do not usually do this without a great deal of thought. It is important that parents have discussed why they want the carer to look after their child and what arrangements and contingencies should be made if, for example, the child falls ill or has an accident. You should also have discussed the child's health and education and agreed financial arrangements for their care.

What do you need to do if you have a private fostering arrangement?

If you think you are involved in a private foster care arrangement you are legally required to inform the council about this. You need to let the council know as soon as the arrangement is made, or at least six weeks before.

If the arrangement is made in an emergency, then you must get in touch within 48 hours. You can do this by contacting Knowsley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0151 443 4311** or visit www.knowsleyscp.org.uk

Knowsley's Children's Services need to be provided with basic facts, such as:

- The child's name, date of birth and religion
- How long the child is expected to stay with the carer
- Name and address of the child's parents, carer and anyone else who has parental responsibility for them
- The date the arrangement started (or is expected to start)
- Any offences the carers have been convicted of. Having convictions does not mean the carer can't privately foster, but the convictions will need to be considered



Why Knowsley's Children's Service Need to Be Involved

We will arrange for a social worker to assess the needs of the child and visit both the parents and carer to see what support and advice you may need. The social worker will need to establish whether the carer's household is safe and suitable for the child and what arrangements have been made for the child's health and education.

The carer will be asked to fill in forms to check their records with the Disclosure and Barring Service, health, education etc.

The social worker will:

- Help the parents and carer work together. They will help the carer get the services they may need to meet the needs of the child, including agreeing parental consent for medical treatment
- Assess the carer's household to ensure it is safe and suitable for the child
- Want to discuss arrangements alone with the child if the child is old enough
- Discuss arrangements with the child's parents
- Discuss any arrangements they feel are not satisfactory
- Notify other agencies of the arrangements and consult with them to obtain information about the child. The social worker will write a report summarising all of the information they have gathered and then a decision will be made whether the arrangement is approved or not. The social worker will let the parents and carer know the decision as well as informing them in writing.

If the Arrangement is Approved

If the arrangement is approved Children's Services will continue to support the carer and the child. We have a legal requirement to see children in private foster care regularly; this will be at least every six weeks within the first year of a private fostering arrangement. If the child is old enough the social worker may request to speak with them alone. Every six weeks they will also arrange a review meeting with everyone to see how the arrangement is working and what support may be needed.

If the Arrangement is not approved

If Children's Services decide it is better that the child is not privately fostered by the carer, this will be discussed with everyone involved as well as what the best alternative arrangements might be. This could be a range of options, including:

- An alternative private foster care arrangement
- The child returning to live with their parents, with support services provided
- The child moving to live with a close relative
- The child being looked after by the local authority.

If the carer is not approved, they must stop caring for the child. The decision can be appealed by the carer by contacting Children's Services in writing. The carer will then be advised of further action which can be taken.

Working Together

It is important that parents and carers work together, and that the child sees this is happening for their benefit. Parents need to provide carers with as much information as possible about the child. You need to agree what arrangements are to be made about the child's contact with their parents and make sure the child understands. The child may have a lot of anxieties about living with carers and worry about when they will see their parents again. Contact can be in lots of different ways: face-to-face is best but if parents are abroad or a long distance away, it may only be possible to keep in touch by video calls, phone, e-mail, text and letters.

The child may have difficulties settling in and show this through behaviour which may be difficult to manage - for example tempers, unusual behaviour, bedwetting. If their behaviour becomes a problem the social worker can offer advice. They could also offer the carers training alongside other carers who deal with similar behaviour.